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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 RSR-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 L-03

NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 OMB-01 (ADP) W

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R 021712 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8869
INFO USMISSION BRUSSELS EC
AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS PARIS 9187

E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: PLAB, F
SUBJECT: WILDCAT STRIKE AT RENAULT BILLANCOURT

1. SUMMARY: WILDCAT STRIKE BY 373 SEMI- SKILLED METAL PRESS WORKERS AT RENAULT' S BILLANCOURT PLANT NOW IN 13 TH DAY CONTINUES TO RECEIVE PUBLIC AND TRADE UNION ATTENTION PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF FOCUS ON STRIKERS' DEMANDS ON WORK CONDITIONS AND CLASSIFICATION. END SUMMARY.

2. PUBLICLY ACCUSING " GAUCHISTS" OF INSTIGATING STRIKE, CGT AT FIRST OPPOSED RENAULT WALKOUT. CONTINUATION OF STRIKE, HOWEVER, COMPELLED CGT TO CHANGE TACTICS IN ORDER TO REASSERT ITS AUTHORITY. IT NEGOTIATED ABORTIVE SETTLEMENT WITH MANAGEMENT WHICH PROVIDED 8-0/0 INCREASE IN FORM OF ADDITIONAL BONUS TO COMPENSATE FOR DIFFICULT

WORK CONDITIONS WHICH WAS ONE OF STRIKERS' GRIEVANCES. HAILING AGREEMENT AS VICTORY, CGT URGED SWIFT APPROVAL AND RETURN TO WORK.

3. WITH ONLY A MINORITY OF STRIKERS PRESENT, MARCH 28 ASSEMBLY DECIDED TO REJECT SETTLEMENT AND TO CONTINUE WITH STRIKE. FACED WITH THIS DECISION CGT DID ANOTHER 180 DEGREE TURN, AGAIN BACKED STRIKERS, AND CALLED NOT ONLY FOR STRIKE PAY, BUT ALSO FOR CLASSIFI- CATION UPGRADING OF ENTIRE SEMI- SKILLED CATEGORY. COMPANY REFUSED
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TO GO BEYOND ORIGINAL " SETTLEMENT" AND TEMPORARILY LAID OFF 7,000 MEN DUE ALLEGEDLY TO SHORTAGE OF BODY COMPONENTS. SYMPATHY WALKOUTS ARE REPORTED BY PRESS WORKERS AT RENAULT' S SANDOUVILLE AND FLINS PLANTS.

4. IN RESPONSE TO CHALLENGE BY WILDCAT STRIKE, ALL UNIONS (CGT, CFDT, FO AND CGC) FOUND THEMSELVES IN SUPPORT OF DEMAND FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A SINGLE PAY SCALE FOR ALL CATEGORIES OF RENAULT WORKERS. FO, HOWEVER, CALLED FOR FORMAL VOTE BY STRIKERS BECAUSE OF EVIDENCE THAT SMALL MILITANT MINORITY HAD BEEN IMPOSING ITS WILL.

5. UNION LEADERS AT BOTH LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS HANDLING STRIKE WITH MODERATION BUT INSIST THAT ENTIRE QUESTION OF ASSEMBLY LINE WORK CONDITIONS AT RENAULT RECEIVE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.

6. PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED UNION- MANAGEMENT MEETING 3 APRIL TO DISCUSS SEMI- SKILLED PAY SCALE IS NEXT STEP IN WHAT-- NOTWITHSTANDING SHARP ISSUE OF WORK CONDITIONS-- OBSERVERS BELIEVE TO BE A LIMITED CON
-
FLICT IN RENAULT PLANT.

7. COMMENT: THOUGH GOVERNMENT- OWNED, RENAULT ENJOYS AUTONOMY IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS; THEREFORE FACT OF " CARETAKER" GOVERNMENT IS OF NO SIGNIFICANCE IN PRESENT SITUATION.

8. BILLANCOURT ACTION ILLUSTRATES ONCE AGAIN DISRUPTION WHICH CAN BE CAUSED BY RELATIVELY FEW WORKERS IN KEY POSITON. THIS SECOND SUCH OUTBREAK SINCE 1970 AT RENAULT RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT EFFECTIVENESS OF LABOR CONTROL IN PLANTS WHERE CGT MAJORITY UNION. AS SOME OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED, DISCIPLINE INCREASINGLY BECOMING THE VICTIM OF FRUSTRATIONS OF ASSEMBLY LINE WORK, AND OF DISILLUSION-MENT WITH POLITICIZED TRADE UNIONISM.

9. 95-0/0 OF BILLANCOURT STRIKERS ARE IMMIGRANTS. FOREIGN WORKERS NOW COMPRISE 20-0/0 OF FRANCE' S INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE, AND ROUGHLY 70-0/0 OF HER SEMI- SKILLED WORKFORCE. IMMIGRANT WORKERS
HAVE BEEN FOCUS OF PARTICULAR ATTENTION BOTH OF UNIONS AND
" GAUCHISTES".
IRWIN

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